

Roles and Techniques of the Police During the Edo Period (1603-1867)

History:

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616) captured an overwhelming victory at the landmark battle of Sekigahara where his army stood opposed by a coalition of lords loyal to Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) led by Moori Terumoto (1553-1625). In 1603, to consecrate his victory, Ieyasu received the title of shogun from the emperor Goyozei, a feat which his two predecessors, Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, were never able to achieve. He then put in place a new warrior government, or bakufu, in the city of Edo, modern day Tokyo.

This new era, which would last nearly two and a half centuries, was characterized by a long period of peace where the warrior roles and customs would change dramatically. However, it must be noted that the Edo period was far from being trouble free - many dissidents who rallied around the son of Hideyoshi, Toyotomi Hideyori (1593-1615), and opposed the powers that be needed to be dealt with. The siege of Osaka castle in 1614 would prove to be the end of Hideyori, and the battle of Shimabara in Kyushu in 1637 marked the end of Christianity and other dissident groups in Japan.

Throughout this period, the relative peace would lead to a flourishing of many schools of *bujutsu*, the teaching of types of weapons and techniques that up until this time were transmitted to the elite in the greatest of secrecy during the Sengoku period (1480-1570), and would now shift from the shadows into the light and would finally end up being used by the law enforcement that came into fruition under the new Tokugawa government during the Edo period.

The warriors or bushi, would have to very quickly adapt themselves to this new era where all combat, duels, and quests of vengeance would be prohibited and condemned systematically by the government. Similarly, the warriors who would take up posts in law enforcement in the city of Edo, capital of the new government, could no longer be able use radical techniques that aimed at killing one's adversary, but rather techniques that would disarm and control without taking life.

As well, a type of weapon whose transmission was kept secret at the heart of a weapons school, would become the new symbol of order. This transmission encompassing a large variety of weapons was called **To no mono**, **Soto no mono**, and **Kakushi buki**.

Transmission of To no mono and Kakushi buki:

That which we call the **To no mono** or **Soto no mono** (外之物) literally; “exterior things” or “object found outside the field of vision”, etc. is a science transmitted at the heart of a Japanese school of combat, dispensing multidisciplinary instruction of combat empty handed or with various weapons applicable to the battle field, brawls, duels, etc. This science was transmitted as secretly as possible along with the practice of *kenjutsu*, *jujutsu*, *bojutsu*, etc.

It forms a part of the profound principles, *o-gi* (奧義), essential techniques, *goku-i* (極意), and reverse techniques, *ura waza* (裏技), which were not transmitted until the other disciplines like *kenjutsu*, *ju-taijutsu*, etc. were mastered and most importantly, that the disciple had the complete confidence of the master. In effect, the transmission of *soto no mono* included two types of teachings unique to *bujutsu* which are called **kuden** (口傳), oral transmission and **taiden** (體傳), corporeal transmission.

However, in the case of the transmission of *soto no mono*, the oral and corporeal transmissions took on a whole new meaning as they included technical details unique to the manner of using the body and weapon as taught in the *soto no mono*. We discover here as well, another meaning for the term *soto no mono* that suggests more strongly that it pertains to types of weapons that are far from the “beaten path”, and therefore unorthodox, and that are not to be practiced in public view. In this way it is indeed a skill on the fringe, outside of the usual combat methods of the school but that applies to the core physicality that remains the driving force of the school.

As well, at the time a candidate acquires this transmission, he also receives in addition to the **menkyo kaiden** (免許皆伝 : attestation to the mastery of the disciplines taught by the school), several **densho** (傳書 : work of transmission for the techniques of the school) and **makimono** (巻物 : scroll in which are transcribed an index of the techniques, history, technical terms, and the genealogy of the school) and most importantly he is given the **ku-densho** (口傳書 : work containing all of the *kuden* of the school relating to techniques and the use of weapons of *soto no mono*) and the **e-densho** (繪傳書 : work containing sketches and technical outlines for the fabrication of the weapons of *soto no mono*, see photo 1). It goes without saying that these last two works cannot exist one without the other and of course not forgetting the art of using the body freely in its entirety in all situations.

Because the weapons employed by the *soto no mono* were created for critical combat situations where the situation was moving in favor of the adversary, we always find a portion of every *densho* reserved for the practice and use of the weapons of *soto no mono*. The **shinkage-ryu kadensho-soto mono no maki** (新影流家傳書. 外之物之巻 : Family Transmission of Strategy, chapter, *soto no mono*) written in 1632 by *Yagyū Munenori Tajima no kami* (1571-1646) of the *Yagyū Shinkage ryū*, or perhaps the **Shintoo-ryū bokuden hyakushū** (新當流. 朴伝百首 : The One Hundred Poems of Bokuden, *Shintoo-ryū* school), a *densho* that presents all of the oral teachings of Tsukahara

Bokuden (1486-1571) founder of the *Shinto ryu* also called the *Bokuden ryu*, are good examples; the translation of the latter is as follows:

“The art which we call *soto no mono* is taught outside of the main body of techniques of the school, though it is an extension of the basic teachings of the school. It is not an art which can be perfected in the course of training in the *dôjô*, as it is a practice devoted to real situations; one has to practice in such a way that it can be used at any moment in everyday life...”

We understand starting from the first few lines that the *soto no mono* is a practice that encompasses some unique weapons, the driving force of which comes from the basic teachings of the school, whether that be *kenjutsu*, *bojutsu*, etc., and that outside of training in the *dojo* it is a practice that must be constantly polished in everyday life in order to be able to face any aggression or danger that could arise.

The rest of the text goes even further to pinpoint a more specific name for these kinds of weapons that was already being transmitted before the period of feudal wars or the *sengoku* period:

“...Possessing the practical knowledge allows one to face any weapon in the most difficult of situations: Knowing the methods and techniques related to unorthodox weapons that are not practiced in the basic system taught directly by the school. Even when we do not carry the two swords at our belt, we must have this type of weapon hidden on our person and face an assailant by relying on the basic physical movement taught by the school. This is the essential principle of *kakushi buki*.”

This passage effectively illustrates the uses of what would later become known as the symbolic weapons of protection and order in the application of justice by the new Edo police. In fact, one would only make use of these unorthodox weapons in a difficult battle against a “strong” weapon, for example; sword against spear, sword against *naginata*, sword against stick, sword against *kusari-gama*, or even sword against empty hand or simply against an assailant armed with projectile weapons i.e. *shuriken*. Moreover, it enlightens us to the fact that this was a type of weapon that was not taught in the school where the discipline could be focused around *kenjutsu*, *bojutsu*, or *jujutsu* whose use and mastery depended upon the essential movement which remained the heart of the practice. This leads to the fact that these adepts who received this knowledge were real experts in the wielding of a wide array of weapons like the *jutte*, *tanbo*, *tessen*, *naeshi*, *kusari fundo*, *shurikenjutsu*, etc., and so the teaching would be kept secret as it was very dangerous.

We understand immediately that in order to use that which is hidden from the view of the assailant, and more importantly, to do so without giving off any intention that might give away the use of the weapon, requires a flexible mastery of the entire body; of the breathing, the emotions and feelings, and the ability to gauge instantly any crisis situation, etc.; in other words, a state of absolute peace that transcends the natural ability of man to keep his cool in the middle of a dangerous situation. All of these aspects must

come together in one movement; wherein lies the soul of the use and practice of the weapons of *soto no mono*.

Therefore, we are able to more deeply grasp the meaning of *kakushi buki* (隠し武器), literally “hidden weapons” or “weapons that we hide” stemming from the fact that they are exterior (*soto no mono*) to the field of vision, distant without being separate from the practice; absent all the while being present.

All of the schools that came about in the Muromachi period (1378-1489) like the *Kage-ryu*, *Chujo-ryu*, *Nen-ryu*, *Kashima-ryu*, *Shinto-ryu*, *Tenshin shoden katori shinto-ryu*, *Bokuden-ryu*, and of course the famous *jujutsu* schools such as the *Shosho-ryu*, *Takeuchi-ryu* that were born in the *sengoku* period, had a curriculum of techniques teaching the use of *kakushi buki* or *soto no mono*, and often with their own proprietary weapons.

Of course, it goes without saying that the schools of *ninjutsu*, by the secretive nature of this art as a whole, developed a wide range of *kakushi buki* through a science of combat materialized by a natural movement devoid of rigid forms that merge exceptionally the contrary principles, the aspects of force, long and short distances and diverse weaponry, called *juppô sesshō no jutsu* (十方折衝之術).

The schools which we have mentioned above were among the top schools in the practice of *bujutsu* both with weapons and empty hand. They all attracted many practitioners and their skills were highly sought after by the prominent warlords of the time. Weapons like the *tessen* (鉄扇); the fan worn by high ranking warriors, courtesans, and *kabuki* actors, despite its unassuming appearance was nonetheless a formidable weapon. Moreover, when it is used in the context of a dangerous attack where the adversary is using a weapon like the sword, its effectiveness demonstrates a real mastery of body movement, of distance, and of space. There are three types of *tessen* (photo 2): the *maiogi* (舞扇) used by *no* and *kabuki* artists as well as in other popular dances; the *sensu* (扇子) for everyday use; and the *gunsen* (軍扇) carried by warriors and that would be later used by high ranking police officers of the Edo period.

It was also customary for the warrior not to tarnish his sword and to therefore control with either the *tessen* or the *naeshi* (萎えし see photo 3), the *tanbo* (短棒 photo 4) or the *jutte* (十手 photo 5), after having disarmed the assailant without injuring him. Moreover, these same types of weapons that would later be used as the semi-exclusive weapons of the police of the Edo period, grew out of the troubled *sengoku* period where their mastery was limited to a small entourage of initiates and select high ranking warriors.

The *jutte* was also a weapon that was kept secret as its teaching, from the beginning of the *sengoku* period, gave one the ability to reverse a situation at any moment. The essence of the *jutte* is based upon the *Heiho Niten ichi ryu* (兵法二天一流) of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1685) who learnt the secrets of its use from his adoptive father Miyamoto Munisai (16th century), master of the renowned *Tori ryu*

kenjutsu(當理流劍術). This school would later perpetuate itself under the name *Jutte tori ryu*(實手當理流) and its transmission is found within the *Enmei ryu*(圓明流) which is known under the name *Enmei jutte ryu*(圓明實手流) or as the *tetsujin jutte-ryu*(鐵人實手流).

However, the *jutte* from this school is completely different; in fact it was exclusively created for use in situations where the combat could become suddenly disadvantageous. If we take a look at photo 6 it becomes clear that the *jutte* transmitted by the *enmei ryu* was a multi-purpose weapon. Photo 7 shows different orientations of the *jutte* in its most basic form. The *e-densho* (photo 8) illustrates the dimensions and materials needed to create this weapon.

Similarly, the term as well as the Sino-Japanese character that describes the *jutte* differs according to the period and the school. In fact, even though it is read *jutte* (十手), a reading that comes from the language spoken in the city of Edo, we also see the readings *jitte*, *jutte*, *jittei*, and *juttei*. As well, the reading of the first character (實) was one of *makoto*, *minoru*, *jitsu* which means; to stand its ground, truth, real, etc. Therefore it consists of a simple weapon with an unassuming appearance, but that will, in the hands of an expert in the movement of the body, “stand its ground” immediately in all “real” situations.

The ancient schools of *bujutsu* that secretly dispensed teaching of this weapon left their names etched in the history of the *bujutsu*, to note; *Kage ryu*, *Shinkage ryu*, *Yagyū ryu*, *Komagawa kaishin ryu*, *Kukishin ryu*, *Takeuchi ryu*, *Shosho ryu*, etc.

This weapon was also used by the *Dōshin*(同心) *Shihai-kaikyu*(支配階級), *Machi-kata*(町方), *Oniwaban*(御庭番), *Onmitsu*(隱密), *Metsuke*(目付), *Teppō-tai*(鉄砲隊) who were all at different levels, groups that made up the police in Edo, put in place by the Tokugawa. The Tokugawa family was the only one who knew how to judiciously employ the *ninja* of *Koga* and *Iga*. They entered into the service of the Tokugawa beginning at the battle of *Ujizane* castle in 1562 where Ieyasu freed his family that had been taken hostage, and at the time of the siege of *Honnō* temple in 1582 where Oda Nobunaga committed suicide.

The *ninja* of *Koga* and *Iga* that were in the service of the Tokugawa formed the basis of the new Edo police. Each had their own role, as not all of them were expert marksman, technicians, or spies; and they were divided among the groups mentioned above. The *machi-kata* lived on the outskirts of Edo where crime was rampant. They did rounds with a type of weapon like the 1.80m stick (*bō*), the sword and *jutte*, and a rope used to subdue the criminal with a high degree of skill unique to Japan known under the generic title *tori-nawa-jutsu* (捕縄術) or *hōjo-jutsu* which included as well *shibaru-jutsu* (縛術); the art of tying up (photo 9). This art which consists of binding the adversary during combat or of tying him up while controlling him with a joint lock, existed already in the old schools of the *sengoku* period.

Later on, schools like the *Muhen-ryu* (無辺流), *Toda-ryû* (戸田流), *Kiraku-ryû* (気楽流) and *Araki-ryû* (荒木流) that came into existence in the Edo period; whose lineages stem from the *Takeuchi ryu* that was already teaching *tori-nawa-jutsu* during the *sengoku* period, began to develop themselves.

The *Shihai-kaikyû* were groups that repressed trouble at the time of disturbances and revolts that could have materialized from general discontent. They too, possessed the same types of weapons.

The *Oniwaban* and *Onmitsu* brought together all the qualities of combatant, spy, marksman, and strategist. A striking example was Hattori Hanzô (1543-1596), nicknamed Oni Hanzô “Hanzô the demon” who was the head of the *Onmitsu*, the secret police in charge of monitoring the actions of the different *daimyo* that held strategic regions, not unlike the *metsuke*. His residence was constructed near one of the gates of the Tokugawa castle in Edo that had the name “*Hanzô no mon*”, the gate of Hanzô. Today, one of the Tokyo metropolitan train lines has the name “*Hanzô-mon-line*”, as it designates the station where the residence of Hanzô existed long ago.

The *Oniwaban* were charged with the duty of protecting the living quarters of the Tokugawa family in Edo castle. As it was prohibited to draw a sword or any weapon within the confines of the castle, we understand how weapons like the *jutte* or the *tanbo* which stem from the use of the *naeshi*, were used to disarm and control the adversary. We can clearly see the reasoning behind using a *ninja* for this type of police work; in effect, the Tokugawa entrusted this mission to a group of specialists, established experts in the art of operating discretely and above all silently, in order to avoid any ruckus.

The *teppô-tai* was a group armed with firearms, the majority of whose members were survivors of *Negoro* temple, renowned for its mastery and construction of firearms; that was later destroyed by Oda Nobunaga in 1560. This armed unit protected the shogun as he was leaving the castle. They carried the name *Okubo hyaku-nin-shu* (大久保百人衆), the hundred men of Okubo, as the group had established itself in the district of Okubo that is presently located along the *yamanote line*, a principal line on the Tokyo metropolitan rail system.

Totally representative of this police force was the art of *kakushi buki*, highly valued for its inconspicuous appearance and of course for the multiple uses that it offers. The *naeshi* (萎えし) whose use would give birth to the art of the *tanbô*, was used very early on by the police as it allows one to control the vital points and joints to restrict the mobility of the adversary and could also be used against any weapon in any space. The Japanese version of this weapon shows that its use allows one to annihilate the resistive power of the adversary.

It is therefore a weapon that allows one to “steal”, to take away the freedom of movement of the adversary, which for a weapon of inoffensive appearance is very significant and which explains the choice of this weapon to arm the various police units

in Edo and also the fact that its transmission in the past was kept secret. The *naeshi* was obtained from a bow that had been broken, which explains the ancient term *yume ore tsue* (弓折れ杖), “cane born from a broken bow”. It goes without saying that the methods and materials required to create this type of weapon, like all of the others, varied according to school, person, region, etc. They could be made of wood, iron, composite materials, etc.

The warriors from the periods prior to the Edo period used the *naeshi* but under the ancient appellation *hana-neji* (鼻振), to control their mount or a stubborn animal, which corresponds well to the meaning of the word; *hana*, the nose and *neji* from the verb *nejiru* which signifies to twist or torsion. To control an animal by hitting his nose, which implies knowledge of the vital points, and a subtle knowledge of the human body transmitted conjointly with the art of the *soto no mono*.

Later on, the use of this instrument as a weapon of control without seeking to injure or take life, slowly but surely spread. It is immediately obvious that the use of the *naeshi*, just like that of the *tanbo*, requires an exceptional mastery of the art of moving the body as well as a strong focus and foresight of the situation that arises when this type of weapon is used.

Two famous schools that began at the beginning of the Edo period taught the arts of the *naeshi* and *tanbô* which resulted from them. The first is the *Yagyu shingan ryu jujutsu* (柳生心眼流), for the first weapon; and the *Asayama Ichiden-ryu taijutsu* (浅山一傳流) for the *tanbô*. The latter school would eventually be responsible for the diffusion of the *tanbo* and of *tori-nawa-jutsu* to police throughout Japan as the techniques that it presented were extremely effective.

Throughout the entire Edo period, those who we would call the *tori-mono* (捕者), the trappers who used all of these weapons, also called *tori-mono* (捕物: weapons for trapping, to apprehend a criminal) that originate from the transmission of the *kakushi buki*, *soto no mono*, and from the ancient schools of *bujutsu*, would spearhead a police force that judiciously incorporated the concept of controlling without injuring in the application of justice. This reveals that the ultimate knowledge of these weapons lies in the control of the body and spirit, and forms the cornerstone of the most efficient application of an equitable form of justice in the service of the disadvantaged.

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Legend:

- Photo1: Densho from the Toda-ryu explaining the characteristics of the *fundo-kusari*.
Manuscript published in 1895.
- Photo 2: The three types of *tessen*, the first; the *tensu*: normal fan, the second; the *maiogi*: for the theatre, and the third; the *gusen*: for application in combat.
- Photo 3: Different lengths of *naeshi* also called *yumi ore tsue*.
- Photo 4: The *tanbo*, in wood or metal or in a less esthetic form.
- Photo 5: Different types of *jutte*.
- Photo 6: Type of *jutte* transmitted in the *tori-ryu*.
- Photo 7: The same *jutte* retractible and used in many ways.
- Photo 8: Densho (1751) from the *testujin jutte-ryu* showing the characteristics of the *jutte* as transmitted by musashi's father.
- Photo 9: Picture taken from the e-densho of the shinto maji-ryu, (1700) and of the Jujutsu Kenbozukai hiketsu.
- Photo 10: